Applicant Name: COLUMBINE TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC.

Project Title: Delivering Enhanced Broadband Connections through Eastern Idaho

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

Almost the entire state of Idaho is 'rural and remote' with a land area of 82,747 square miles and a 2008 estimated population of 1,429,000. Idaho is the fourteenth largest state in area, but one of the least populated states in the nation, averaging 17.26 people per square mile. Excluding the western Idaho Boise metroplex, the entire state's population is less than one million people yet the state has a land mass larger than all of the New England states combined. Cities, towns and small communities are predominantly distributed across the state with two hour drives between population centers of 10,000 to 50,000 people. Idaho businesses and citizens have by necessity begun to strongly embrace broadband technology to overcome the distance and density factors. Today, there is an approximate 30 mile gap between the endpoints of an existing fiber network that traverses nearly two-thirds of the state of Idaho. The 'gap' is located in extreme eastern Idaho, between Clementsville and Rexburg. The resulting fiber optic ring topology would consist of this project, existing fiber segments owned by Applicant and existing fiber segments owned by other established telecommunications companies serving Idaho. The anchor institutions in the region, numerous state agencies, other communications carriers, business entrepreneurs, health care providers, educational facilities and community leaders have identified closing the gap as a high priority. The potential effects of this project have far-reaching socioeconomic benefits, including improved and more affordable broadband access for public and private businesses, including learning institutions, medical facilities, and small business owners. When completed, this project will enable robust and diverse (redundant) broadband network opportunities for six counties and 16 communities in Idaho. Direct and indirect beneficiaries of a robust and diverse (redundant) fiber optic broadband network topology include: 'The University of Idaho, Idaho State University, and Brigham Young University-Idaho and Eastern Idaho Technical College' '22 Idaho Public Schools' '17 Participating Facilities (hospitals, community mental health centers and substance abuse clinics) in the Idaho District 7 Health Network' 'Other providers, telecommunications carriers and adjoining state networks seeking alternate or protected broadband transport and carrier class service routes in and out of Teton Valley, Idaho, Jackson, Wyoming, and the state of Idaho in general' 'Start-up businesses looking for network reliability, existing businesses seeking to expand to other communities or connect offices using less costly, shorter transport and circuit routes. The project will consist of a robust DWDM and SONET architecture to provide up to 40 lambdas of 2.5 Gb/s capacity in a working/protect configuration and OC-48 down to DS1 services. Columbine currently maintains an open network policy and through its Internet provider company does not differentiate among applications that traverse its Internet network. Columbine commits to adhere to the NOFA's non-discrimination and network interconnection obligations if awarded BTOP funds. Columbine Telephone Company, Inc., doing business as Silver Star
Communications, has over fifty years' experience building and operating a widespread, state-of-the-art broadband network. Columbine has designed, constructed and operates a robust network consisting of over 396 miles of transport fiber optic cable supporting diverse and redundant DWDM and SONET circuits. Columbine has extensively experienced personnel across all departments, from management to engineering, operations to customer service and finance, all of whom are prepared to implement and operate this proposed project as an integral part of its existing robust network. This proposed project: Delivering Enhanced Broadband Connections through Eastern Idaho is estimated to result in 82 direct created or saved jobs. This is a significant number considering the economically challenged status of the Teton Valley Idaho area, due in part to its rural nature. For more than a decade, telecommunications carriers have tried to justify the costs required to Deliver Enhanced Broadband Connections through Eastern Idaho. The estimated costs provided herein are reasonable given that the project will traverse difficult construction and cable plowing terrain such as dormant lava flows. ARRA broadband stimulus funding represents an opportunity to invest in the area's future by constructing a critical and long-needed project for the state of Idaho that might not otherwise be constructed due to costs and area remoteness.